Troubles the Subway Brings

What going home to Harlem to lunch means; Subway divorces needed.

You really do get "to Harlem in fifteen minutes"—if you are lucky.

No longer need the man who lives "topside" in New York, as the Chinese call that section of Manhattan, have to explain that Harlem begins the next street above the one in which he lives, making of that locality a mere matter of opinion. No longer can the Harlem family, moving to Brooklyn for the winter, speak of spending the cold months in the South.

All that is over and done with. The subway has more than strange odors, glaring scenic effects and mysterious rumblings to make the joy of its advent questionable. It has to face the indignation of a community used to the Harlem joke and strenuous in regard to its rights. It is the subway that will be blamed, and rightly, by the habitués of vaudeville for the death of that sterling gag.

But about the most vital change of all in the habits of an entire community established in its fixed routine little has been said. That is the habit the Harlem man has formed of going home to lunch.

THE HARLEM CANDIDA.

Do you know what it means to have a man come home to luncheon? If you do you are a housekeeper; if you do not you are either living at an apartment hotel or with your mother-in-law. The subway has possibilities of home wrecking which no one can ignore.

A melancholy looking woman strolled into the office of a lawyer whose name is usually associated, in a legal capacity of course, with domestic troubles. She sat down wearily.

"I heard of a woman over in Jersey who got a divorce because her husband insisted on eating crackers in bed," she said. "I want to know if I can get one on account of the subway?"

"I don't think," responded the lawyer, "that the State has taken that into consideration as a cause, but there is plenty of time. No doubt the next Legislature——"

"I'll have to wait for that?" she sighed. "I'd like to ask you one thing—just one thing. What would you do if you were a woman living in a State where you can't get a divorce for such an outrageous system as this rapid transit affair?"

The lawyer didn't know, so he waited for the explanation, which, he had discovered in his acquaintance with the many injured of the so called weaker sex, had always to be introduced by many preliminaries.

"Of course, I don't object to it on general principles," she asserted, "but when a man is so lost to all sense of honor as to use it to come to lunch I think the courts ought to interfere. Here's my case:

"Husband is healthy, never had a day's sickness in his life, never even had his face smashed with a football. Absolutely, he's disgustingly sound. Incidentally, we live on a Harlem income and I do my own work.

"None of your French breakfasts for husband. Every morning he has his saucer of breakfast food, two and sometimes three cups of coffee, broiled ham or chops or a bit of steak, buttered toast, eggs in the shell, and in cold weather always cakes and maple syrup. The cake season and the subway opened at the same time.

"Husband says that he was brought up to that breakfast and it's the least a man can do to preserve some of the innocent teachings of his childhood. I think when it comes to preserving that kind one may be a little too conservative. Up to this time, though, I've been a good hardworking wife. But the worm will turn.

"I get his breakfast every morning; then I'm too tired to eat. You know a cook never eats. Husband ploughs his way through while he reads his paper, spilling at least half a cup of coffee on the table cloth each day. He takes it slowly at first but hurries through the last course and with a swift, maple sugar kiss on my cheek, goes to his work.

"Then I breathe. I clear up the breakfast things, I feed the cat, I water the flowers. Then I begin to get hungry, so I have a snack, just a cup of tea and toast. By that time it is nearly noon.

"That means I have until 5 o'clock for my own special duties, mending, sewing, making calls, marketing, the half hundred things a woman has to do to keep up with her neighbors and every day in the year is too short for. About 5 o'clock I begin to get dinner. Husband gets home at half past six.

"I have felt this subway affair hanging over me for months in a dim, shadowy way—that presentiment that highly strung women have of coming events, but I never imagined that it was going to be as bad as this. At the worst I simply thought we might be blown up in a dynamite explosion. I used to read the accident list, and I really got morbid on the subject.

"Then, when the opening took place, I sort of forgot about my fears; but they came back. Oh, yes, they came back!"

The woman wiped away a furtive tear.

"The other morning Husband sort of balanced himself on his toe and said:

"'Do you know, Smith was telling me that he's coming home to lunch since the subway opened. He can get here from his office in twenty minutes. I've figured out that I can make better time than that even. Think I'll try it to-day. Just get any old thing to eat. It isn't the luncheon I care for, but it'll seem quite like our honeymoon to take lunch with you again, dearie.'

"Then he went out; perhaps it's just as well he did.

"I sat down and bawled a good old fashioned bawl. I know it isn't considered swagger any more for a woman to cry, but I don't care. I saw my pleasant days slipping away, all the free hours I had to myself.

"At half past 11, just when I got through my work, I began to get luncheon. I had thought I would have enough food, with a few additions, for that night's dinner, but it went on the table, also some frankfurters that Husband had stopped and bought at a delicatessen, and some potato salad, which necessitated my burning incense for an hour after.

"Husband ate with his watch on one side and a subway time card on the other. He didn't have time to have a little chat afterward. He said Smith had promised to wait for him at the subway station and he must run."

The woman thanked the lawyer for his sympathy and time.

"I'm not a club woman or anything like that," she explained, "but I think it's due to your own sex to do what you can for them. I'm willing to be a pioneer in this field and get the first subway divorce. You'll let me know as soon as the Legislature takes cognizance of it? Thank you?"

Bride has been married only a very short time. Her nuptial celebration preceded the subway's by a few weeks. She has returned and is installed in an apartment house with a gorgeous entrance, where a darkey sits under an artificial palm when he isn't running the elevator. There is plenty of colored marble down there and in three tiny rooms on the fourteenth floor she is radiantly blissful.

LUNCHEON AT HOME.

She had a long description of her wedding in the paper and has sent out cards saying that she will be home to her friends after such and such a date. She wants them all to come and see her happiness, and to hear her talk about her husband's goodness and superiority to other men and her good luck that Fate sent him her way.

It is Bride who discovers that Young Husband can get home to luncheon by the subway. She plans it all out for him and explains the different stations. She is ecstatic over the innovation in what she had supposed was to be her hard married lot, a separation every day from morn until eve. She pictures what her married life would have been had she been married five, four, three, two, even a year ago.

The little maid and she prepare a dainty luncheon. Young Husband has his favorite dishes and they sit longer than the occasion would require, discussing the wonderful arrangement by which two people so perfectly matched, so obviously intended for each other, have been mated.

About the fourth day Young Husband on his road to the subway station encounters a trio of forgotten, no longer boon companions. In spite of his screams they lead him gently but firmly toward their usual resort for luncheon, where before he was "tied," as they express it, he had been a merry-go-round for the bunch.

He is not allowed to telephone; he is jeered into silence when he protests; he is made the butt of their merriment. One envies, one pities and one is simply amused.

Bride walks the floor with her hands to her head. It has come—that first step toward the final separation, the real death of love.

She sends the luncheon away untouched. She gets out a volume of Maeterlinck and one of Ibsen, holding one in either hand and reads alternate chapters. If she had but heeded their warning what unhappiness might have been saved. "He is tired of her." It is all summed up in that.

She pictures the long line of unhappy women, victims of man's perfidy, of whom she is now an unmarked, uncared for unit.

How often he has congratulated himself on being on a salary and having regular hours so that his noontime need not be disturbed. He has asseverated that it never shall be.

In incoherent moments she blames the subway. If it were not for that, she would have lived the trusting life of her kind. She would never have doubted, for knowledge of that corrupt noon hour—spent where?—would have been mercifully denied. She reads another chapter of Ibsen and has the maid bathe her forehead.

Suddenly an awful thought occurs to her. He has never told her whether or not he has a typewriter. That is where the noon hour is spent. The typewriter probably has golden hair and blue eyes, they all have, she has heard, and scientists say that they are all fascinating.

She gets into her outside clothes rapidly. She is glad now that there is a subway; if there was not, she might have to use the slow moving elevated. She is feverish. But truth is better than uncertainty.

At the door she leans tremblingly against the casing while she opens a telegram the blue buttoned boy hands to her.

"Home early. Love."

What a dear he is! He has cut out his lunch hour, probably worked right through so he could get back quicker. She decides to walk down to the subway and meet him. That dear subway! If it were not for that he could not get to her for another hour.

It is 12:30 o'clock exactly when Mrs. Busy Wife hands the baby to husband as he comes in.

"He's got a new kind of pain. He's been crying all the morning in G flat. When he cries in F I know it's a pin, and when he gets to C minor it's his food. You hold him while I run over to the doctor. Don't shake him that way, shaking a baby never stopped his crying. I've told you that every night you've walked with him.

There is no trace of luncheon. Spouse puts baby in the cradle and pays no attention to his cries. It's a serious thing for a man to leave the Battery, and take that trip simply to hold the baby, but Busy Wife had told him to come home and he has come.

By the time she returns he has had a slice of bread and butter and a bit of cold beef.

WHEN HE BROUGHT HIS FRIEND HOME TO LUNCHEON.

THE OFFICE DOOR.

"You must see it. It will be my proud privilege to show it to you first. Come, we'll go up home to luncheon. Surprise wife. Oh, my dear old chap, she'll be delighted. The most perfect housekeeper in New York, bar none. When you've once tasted her coffee, you'll change your views about matrimony."

In the subway he points out the objects of interest. "To my taste, I think it would have been improved by having a kind of scenic railway effect, pictures from the poets or changing cinematographic views."

Dear old chap is exchanging stares with a pretty girl.

"By jove, she's got a complexion; kind of queer, weird effect. I wonder how she does it?"

She finds him walking up and down and takes the baby from him.

"You take this over to the druggist and get it filled, [handing him a prescription] and be sure to wait for it. If you don't wait for a prescription you never get it. I've found that out."

Spouse murmurs something about a business engagement, and Busy Wife responds tartly:

"Whose child is this? What's a business engagement when it's a question of a child's life? Am I to have all the care and worry? You go and get the prescription and watch carefully. Those drug clerks are dreadfully careless; they are just as likely to give a deadly poison as anything else."

It is while Spouse is at the drug store that Busy Wife finds out that it was a pin after all, and, the cause removed, the heir falls into a deathlike slumber.

When Spouse returns to the office the chief meets him, watch in hand.

"You live in Harlem, Mr. Brown? I thought so. Take the subway home to luncheon, I presume? I assumed so. Of course, you have no idea how long you have been away? An hour? Just two and a half. If it happens again—well, a word to the wise. I understand across the hall they have discharged four clerks in the last week on that account."

Spouse curses the subway.

"I'll never make her understand," he says to himself under his breath, a habit of spouses, "that fifteen minutes to Harlem don't mean an hour doing work around the flat."

When "dear old chap" strolls into his friend's office about 1 for that good old fashioned talk, the visited gentleman, as they say in whist, remembers suddenly that he has only a fifty-cent piece at liberty. He is indebted to "dear old chap" for various kindnesses and has made him promise over and over that the very next time he comes to town he will drop in and have luncheon with him.

Everybody of whom he might borrow money is unfortunately out and he already owes the elevator boy so much that he has walked upstairs for a week. A sudden bright idea illumines his mind. He speaks offhand, hiding his real agitation:

"Seen the subway, I suppose? You haven't? My dear fellow, it's the wonder of the age. It's a mechanical marvel. I've ridden in the 'tupenny tube' in London and in the Boston Sub, but, well, they're back numbers, that's all, back numbers.

"Did you know that the subways of Paris and London had to be built through clay and that of Boston entirely through earth, but in the construction of our subway it has been necessary to cut away nearly a million cubic yards of rock in the open and half a million cubic yards of rock by tunnelling? We have used over 71,000 tons of steel and nearly 10,000 tons of cast-iron; over half a million yards of concrete and nearly a million yards of waterproofing." He is talking against time.

"That's the regular subway complexion. Its distinct pallor is due to artificial light and damp air. They say that in time all our subway women will be pale as lilies."

Wife has taken this day of all others to clean house.

"We'll have the rugs taken upon the roof, Bridget," she says. "Wash all the floors. Never mind having plenty of soap suds about. I'll tie up my head in a cloth and clean the silver."

It is upon this happy group that husband and his friend butt in. Bridget comes to the rescue.

"If you two gents 'll go and sit in the hall on the stairs for a few minutes, I'll warm up the hash we had left from dinner last night."

Husband is profuse with apologies. "Bridget's an honest girl," he exclaims as they sit on the stairs according to her orders, "but she's more or less of a foo Absolutely don't know the difference between a stew and Hungarian goulash."

The English Candida found her poet wandering on the Thames Embankment. The American found hers in the subway. He was long haired, anæmic and held a bunch of manuscript in his hand, which he explained was the libretto of an opera.

He had spent his last five cents for a ride in the subway, thinking that the new thrill might give him an inspiration. He had preempted the title of "subway poet," and while she fed him and admired his oval face, his dark, lustrous eyes and his general air of withdrawal from a strenuous life, he outlined the thoughts that would naturally come to a poet in his first underground voyage.

He is thinking of calling the book "Pale Pillars." He asks if she can think of a better title than that. She can't.

Husband comes in just at that moment. He's never been quite able to make out how wife spends her day. Wife has to take him into the kitchenette while she explains what the artistic temperament really is. Husband has never quite understood that either, being just a plain, ordinary variety of business man. He peeks through the slide which leads from the kitchenette to the dining room and then dashes to the door and sends the boy out for more food of the nourishing variety, instead of the grape fruit salad covered with violets the poet is toying with at that moment.

Husband never passes a beggar on the street without giving him something, if it is no more than a little advice. He lunches amicably with wife and poet and congratulates himself on his way back downtown that "it isn't any worse than that."

It is a poor rule that doesn't work both ways. It is owing to this new method of transit that a man who has always lived in Harlem, was born, schooled, married there, asserts that he first learned how wicked and deceitful the world really is. Until the completion of the subway his environment prevented this information from reaching him. As he tells the story, his sister comes in from Long Island to take her first ride in the subway and naturally appears at his office at luncheon time—in the way sisters from time immemorial have had. He usually has taken his luncheon where he has been waited on by a perfectly respectable middle aged woman, to whom he gives 10 cents a week in tips. He decides that he will take his sister to something better than his daily resort, for she has married well and he doesn't care for sympathy.

They eat a good sized luncheon and he tips the waiter generously and sees his sister to the subway station. When he gets back to the office he finds his wife awaiting him. She has decided to take her first ride downtown and to celebrate by having luncheon with him.

"Let's go to a nice place to-day," she says, and he steers her to the same restaurant to which he has just taken his sister.

When they get inside the same waiter spies them and leads them to his table, mindful of the recent tip. In his whole face and manner one reads that he understands the situation. The diner-out has simply been unlucky that day in having two of his sweethearts demand his time and money, but it is not his place to show that he knows or to betray his patron.

"You've not been in here for a long time," he says, genially.

Then he supplants this by urging him to eat a little something, giving him a wink to show that he thinks his refusal to take food is apt to arouse suspicion. Husband explains the situation to wife, when the waiter finally departs to fill her order, and wife falls into the scheme by adding her entreaties to the waiter's. She says that it is a bad habit to go without luncheons and that he will be ill if he does not take better care of himself.

When they finally rise to go out the

TO TUBE OR NOT TO TUBE.

waiter holds him by the arm a second while he whispers:

"She ain't on. She ain't on."

The Harlem man has just been reading "The Simple Life," and while he is amused at the little comedy, he is appalled at the moral obloquy of a luncheon hour which makes a waiter—a mere waiter—so careful and so sophisticated.

"As soon as that subway gets in working order," he says gloomily to wife, "Harlem will get to be just as bad as any other place."

It is said, finally, that a Harlem man is preparing a revised version of "Hamlet" in which the famous soliloquy will be changed to suit modern conditions and modern thought. The soliloquy reads:

To be or not To be, that is the question.

THE SUBWAY STARE.

HID GOLD IN HIS HAIR.

Trick of a Workman That Turned Him Many a Dishonest Penny.

From the Jewellers' Circular Weekly.

"Did you ever give thought to the rarity of dishonesty among jewelry artisans? Did you ever realize the infrequency of reports of thefts by them?" queried an aged manufacturing jeweller.

"It really seems that the habitual care for his filings, clippings and the like is the experienced artisan's only consciousness of value; otherwise the gold to him is but a commodity to be modelled into a thing of beauty, not an object for his covetousness or greed.

"The older the artisan the more firmly fixed is this habit. As a rule, it is only the younger aspirants, and but few of these, who succumb to temptation; once started on a downward course, however, their own self-consciousness is most frequently their own accuser to shopmate or foreman.

"Many years ago in a Newark shop where mostly solid filed work was made, a seasoned workman observed a quaint habit in a journeyman but recently 'out of his time,' who was seated at an adjoining bench. The latter had very dark hair, wore it long, and (it was in the days of bear's grease and hair oils) kept it well oiled. He had a habit of pushing his fingers up through his long hair as if to keep it from falling over his eyes; it was further noticed that prior to each such action he dabbed his fingers in the bench-pan, wherein had fallen the filings from his work. The habit was not indulged in when away from his seat.

"The foreman, on an occasion when at his back, examining a piece of his work, noticed the sparkle of gold in his hair; mentioning it casually to an older bench fellow when the latter came to the foreman for stock, the quaint habit was detailed by the older man, and set the foreman thinking. He called at the boarding house where the young artisan resided, and, being acquainted with the proprietor, learned that the young man upon coming to midday dinner and to his evening meal invariably sought his room first.

"By reason of his freshly bathed face and hands and his well groomed, oily hair when he appeared at table he was accounted a dandy; but one peculiarity was that of his instruction to the maid who made up his room that she must not dispose of his wash water, as he would attend to that himself.

"It was discovered that he thoroughly washed his hair before each meal, dried it and oiled it, and that with each such operation he deposited in his wash bowl from one to two pennyweights of 18 carat gold filings, which had from five to twelve hours in which to settle before his wash water was decanted therefrom. It was a clear steal of three pennyweights, or at least $2.50, for each of his six working days.

"It is needless to say that after this discovery his silent partnership, with a part of the profits, forthwith ceased.

"Another one of the rare cases was that of a youth whose bench talk about his previous evening's amusements indicated an expenditure beyond his productive capacity as a journeyman. His visits, during shop hours, to the retiring room, were so methodical as to arouse curiosity. It was found that with a pair of pocket scales he balanced against a paper cornucopia of gold filings an equal weight of brass filings which he deposited in another paper cornucopia; after his return to his seat he scattered the brass filings in his benchpan, this being mixed with the larger volume of gold filings in his pan, was finally passed to the foreman as all gold filings, so that his weights tallied with what would be expected from him. But the cornucopia of gold filings was filched by hits from his employers.

"This would-be shrewd one's 'horn of plenty' also was effectually crushed out of existence.

"After all, these two instances being exceptional is why I mention them," and the aged jeweller concluded, with a twinkle of his eye, "I have faith in my men, likewise in the adage that 'It does no harm to watch an honest man, and a thief should be ever watched.'"

The Ignorance of His Teacher.

From the Pittsburg Post.

"Well, Johnny," asked Mr. McRobinson, "how do you like your new teacher? Pretty smart, isn't she?"

"Naw," responded Johnny sourly, "she ain't."

"How do you know?"

"She wuz tellin' us to-day that Jeffries was an English Judge."

"Well, what's wrong with that?"

"Shucks!" said Johnny, in deep disgust. "I thought everybody knowed that Jeffries wuz the American champeen pugilist of the world."